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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABIDJAN 000633

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SUBJECT: COMPAORE CHAIRS OUAGA ACCORD'S FIRST "PERMANENT
CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM" - SORO ACTS TO CLEAR UP CONFUSION
REGARDING HIGH REP FOR ELECTIONS

REF: ABIDJAN 615

Classified By: EconChief EMassinga, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary. OPA facilitator Compaore hosted the first Permanent Consultative Mechanism (CPC) on June 12, bringing together Gbagbo, Soro, Ouattara and Bedie. Members issued a brief, harmonious press statement that touched on key questions of DDR and dismantlement of the militias, as well as efforts to integrate the armed forces. However, the press statement's mention of retaining the post of the High Representative for Elections (HRE) was immediately disavowed by the Presidency in private conversations while touted by the unarmed opposition. Soro told senior international community representatives that he won a compromise in bargaining with Gbagbo, in which President Compaore was given the final say indicating whether to ask the UNSC to retain the HRE position. According to Soro, Gbagbo indicated he would grudgingly accept a UN decision to appoint a new HRE. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore chaired the first-ever meeting of the March 4th Ouaga Accord's "Permanent Consultative Mechanism" (CPC in French) on June 12 in Yamoussoukro. In attendance were the members of the CPC as laid out in the Ouaga Accord: signers President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Soro, former PM and RDR head Alassaine Ouattara, former President and PDCI chief Konan Bedie, along with Ouaga mediator Compaore. The CPC met most of the day in closed session, with even close associates relegated to an adjoining room while the leaders hashed out outstanding issues of the implementation of the OPA and put together the day's press release.

¶3. (SBU) In the end, the CPC issued a brief, clearly-drafted press statement that called for the PM to quickly finish dismantling the militias, greater openness of the state media to present viewpoints from all the major parties, and the facilitator to consult intensively with the Accord's signers to solve the vexing question of ranks for the planned integrated officer corps, which would substantially unblock progress in DDR.

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CPC Statement Mention of HRE Position Leaves Observers
Confused
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¶4. (C) The CPC press statement (not, according to Soro, an official communique) also said "the CPC members requested the facilitator to ensure that the UN maintains the post of High Representative of the United Nations in Cote d'Ivoire." In the initial days following the CPC, emboffs contacted senior representatives from the major parties participating in the CPC, and received a rather confusing set of explanations of this statement.

¶5. (C) The President's Deputy Chief of Staff, Sarata Toure Ottro, told emboff that the President does not support maintaining the position of the High Representative, and that "some members of the CPC had suggested, or made observations" that the HRE position should be retained. Pressed, Toure Outtro said the President "supports maintaining the elections certification function of the HRE, but not the position, and certainly not the person (i.e., Gerard Stoudmann)." A U.K. diplomat told emboff his government had received the same vaguely-expressed opposition to an HRE from other Presidency officials. Similarly, French Ambassador Janier was told by Interior Minister (and the President's chief negotiator at the Ouaga talks) Desire Tagro that the President opposes the continuation of the HRE.

¶6. (C) The Presidential camp's apparent initial disavowal of the CPC's call to maintain the HRE flatly contradicted the understanding of the other major parties. A senior PDCI official told an emboff that his party was happy with the CPC communique, and certainly satisfied with the call to maintain the HRE position. The PDCI expressed satisfaction that Compaore is playing a hands-on role, and sees the continuation of the HRE's role as yet another check on Gbagbo's efforts to manipulate the peace process to his own ends. RDR leader Ouattara was reported to have immediately flown to Paris and Washington as part of a "diplomatic offensive," undoubtedly aimed at underscoring the need to keep the HRE position, about which he has been outspoken since the signing of the OPA (it is unclear whether he will have returned to Abidjan to engage the UNSC's June 18-19 visit). The Forces Nouvelles putative #2 and chief OPA negotiator, Minister of War Victims and Solidarity Dacoury Tabley, was present at the Yamoussoukro conclave but was

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largely silent with Emboff concerning the HRE issue, taking a (typical) sideswipe at the international community for its supposed feebleness in the face of Gbagbo's attempts to seize the upper hand.

¶7. (C) Outgoing HRE Stoudmann sent UNSYG a letter on June 8 (forwarded to AF/W) in which he acknowledged the UNSYG's likely recommendation to fold the HRE's office into ONUCI. He did express considerable dissatisfaction with the President's efforts to marginalize the role of the HRE (be it independent or within the ONUCI framework) in shaping and certifying the identification process. The HRE sees successful identification through the audiences foraines process (due to restart this month, according to the CPC's statement) as essential to get to elections and the end of the OPA transition. Without a thorough process addressing the needs of the 2-4 million Ivorians currently without papers, the HRE believes the problems underlying the division of the country will persist. Emboff received a French draft UNSCR on Cote d'Ivoire from a western diplomat. The draft resolution concedes the HRE position will be eliminated, but calls upon ONUCI to have the robust power to certify all stages of the electoral process, vice simply judging the elections as "free and fair" at the end. The French draft implicitly gives ONUCI the ability to act as arbiter of both the identification process and elections preparations.

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Soro Speaks to Senior Diplomats, Tries to Clear Up Confusion on HRE

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¶8. (C) On June 15, PM Soro hosted a lunch for selected diplomats (U.S., EU, Germany, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Acting SRSG Abou Moussa). On the HRE question, Soro said that he had succeeded in softening the President's opposition to the HRE post, and obtained a compromise by which OPA facilitator Compaore would make the ultimate decision whether to recommend to the UNSC to keep or jettison the position. He added that President Gbagbo has indicated that he did not

want an HRE but would accept one if the UNSC decided to name a replacement for Stoudmann. Soro dismissed the importance of the more hard-line positions expressed by those in the Presidential camp such as Tagro.

¶9. (C) During the luncheon, Soro touched on several other sensitive areas of concern. On the audiences foraines, Soro said the Minister of Justice (Forces Nouvelles) will issue a report specifying how they will operate (the PM said there is a problem related to financing), and that a new decree naming sub-prefects will be submitted to the Council of Ministers by the Interior Minister. The PM's office is reexamining the choice for the contractor to provide identification cards to those going through the audiences foraines; outgoing PM Banny had chosen French firm SAGEM, but the reported \$100 million price tag made the new government balk. (The FPI also favors choosing a new contractor.) New boards of directors for the state-owned television and newspapers are to be announced soon, and with them possible changes in management. (Note: control of both RTI television and the Fraternite Matin newspaper were seized by the President in November, violating the Pretoria Accord. End note) Compaore was asked to put forth a proposal to cut the Gordian Knot of military ranks, indicating that the parties themselves appear unable to break the deadlock.

¶10. (C) On the issue of disarmament of the militias, Soro indicated that President Gbagbo had in private conceded the Guiglo disarmament had been inadequate. Gbagbo reportedly said the event "was not real DDM, but simply encouraging illegally armed youth" to turn in their weapons. Soro said that four centers in the West are ready to receive militiamen and secure their arms, and that militiamen will be given a time limit in which to turn in their weapons at these designated sites. (Note: ONUCI held a DDR meeting on June 13 in which the organization's DDR director said he senses a newfound exasperation on the part of the FANCI towards the militias. ONUCI confirmed that militiamen are being given 15 days to relinquish their weapons, and said that, should they fail to do so, they will face unspecified, strong actions. Meeting attendees from the international community expressed some degree of skepticism that the FANCI and gendermerie will actually forcibly disarm the western militias in 15 days. End Note.)

¶11. (C) Comment. The controversy over the HRE highlights the fact that the seemingly small details of implementing the OPA can become important obstacles that continue to frustrate the accord's overall goals. The PM wants to be seen as

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quietly active behind the scenes in engaging the Presidency and developing compromise policies. Some proof of the effectiveness of this strategy will become evident very soon, when Compaore provides his recommendation to the UNSC and UNSYG on the HRE. End Comment.
HOOKS